

BOOK NOTICE

Webs in The Wind, The Habits of Web-Weaving Spiders, by Winifred Duncan. A Volume of the Humanizing Science Series, The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1949. 387 pages, 74 plates, and 101 text figures. \$4.50.

To the excellent books of the Humanizing Science Series has now been added "Webs in the Wind" by Winifred Duncan. The publication of such a monstrous caricature of spiders, their webs and lives, reflects not only adversely on the author and the naive publisher but upon all other books of the series. Through the eyes of the author (who by her own admission is without biologic training of consequence and without background in the subject matter) we are introduced to a strange world of spiders. "We, my readers and I, would wander like Adam and Eve before the Fall, into a world of unknown creatures and I would describe only what I saw with my own eyes." Thereafter, we wander through nearly four hundred pages of trivia which can have little appeal for any discerning reader and which is paraded before us as an accurate and scientific account and a "significant contribution to the field of nature study." Completely neglected by the author (who eschews all previous learning in the field as incomprehensible to the lay public) is the amassed knowledge in hundreds of papers written in many languages, many of them models of concise field reporting; and yet the author finds "it is the more amazing that so little work has been done in this field—an ideal one for amateurs." Some of the many drawings are seemingly attractive, but most of them suffer from inaccuracy of portrayal and detail. The pages are replete with spelling errors of scientific names and the names of authors. Of the many species portrayed, few can be identified by the verbal description or drawings of spider or web. The habits of some species are ascribed to others and the scientific names and common names are curiously garbled. Errors in fact, errors in interpretation, and erroneous implications are present in countless numbers. The author, no matter how sincere in her efforts to present the amazing lives of spiders for the general reader, has produced a book so bad it cannot be recommended for its intended audience.—
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